

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 are pending in this application. For purposes of expedition, claim 1 has been amended in several particulars for purposes of clarity and brevity that are unrelated to patentability and prior art rejections while Claims 4-11 have been newly added in accordance with current Office policy, to further and alternatively define Applicants' disclosed invention and to assist the Examiner to expedite compact prosecution of the instant application.

Claims 1, 3 and 4 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kimura, U.S. Patent No. 5,672,978 for reasons stated on page 2 of the Office Action (Paper No. 0704). Specifically, the Examiner asserts that Kimura '978 discloses "a second plate-like member 70 between a first plate-like member 66 on which a probe for test 64 is formed and a third plate-like member 73 in which an electrode ... for connecting to an outer portion 76 is formed... a plurality of first electrodes 75 on plate 70 and a first secondary electrode 69 and a plurality of second secondary electrodes ..." While Applicants disagree with the Examiner's assessment of Kimura '978, primarily because Kimura '978 only discloses the use of an inspection electrode unit 70, as shown in FIG. 9, used for inspecting a printed wiring board disposed between a pressing plate 77 and an accepting plate 78, base claim 1 has been amended, for purposes of expedition, to further define that,

wherein the second plate-like member and the third plate-like member are electrically conducted via an elastic conductive member; and

wherein a support member supporting a main surface of the second plate-like member close to the first plate-like member is provided.

These features are not disclosed or suggested anywhere in Kimura '978, along with the specific arrangement of Applicants' first, second and third plate-like members interconnected and interrelated in the way defined by Applicants' claim 1. As a result, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1, 3 and 4 be withdrawn.

Lastly, dependent claim 2 has also been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kimura '978 in view of Kanamaru et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,507,204. However, this rejection is predicated upon the correctness of the rejection of Applicants' base claim 1, which Applicants have demonstrated as being moot. As a result, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 2 be withdrawn for the same reasons discussed.

Claims 5-11 have been newly added to alternatively define Applicants' disclosed invention over the prior art of record. These claims are believed to be allowable at least for the same reasons discussed against all the outstanding rejections of the instant application. For example, base claim 6 defines a plate-like member arranged between a main substrate and a support substrate, wherein:

the main substrate has a plurality of probes formed on a main surface to test electrical characteristics of a subject under test, and secondary electrodes formed on an opposing surface and electrically connected to corresponding probes;

the plate-like member has primary electrodes formed on a bottom surface to align and correspond with the secondary electrodes of the main substrate, and secondary electrodes formed on a top surface to be electrically connected to the corresponding primary electrodes;

the support substrate has wire receptacles aligned with corresponding secondary electrodes formed on the plate-like member; electrical connection members are disposed between the plate-like member and the support substrate, and inserted via the wire receptacles in the support substrate to establish electrical connection with the corresponding secondary electrodes formed on the plate-like member; and

a spacer is disposed between the plate-like member and the main substrate to surround an area where the secondary electrodes of the main substrate are formed and to be connected with the primary electrodes of the plate-like member.

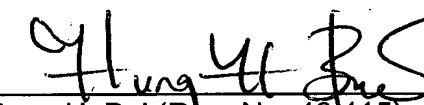
Again, none of the cited prior art references discloses the structure of Applicants' "plate-like member" disposed between a "main substrate" and a "supporting substrate" along with "electrical connection members" and "spacer" as defined in Applicants' base claim 6. As a result, base claim 6 and its dependent claims 7-11 should be placed in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing amendments, arguments and remarks, all claims are deemed to be allowable and this application is believed to be in condition to be passed to issue. Should any questions remain unresolved, the Examiner is requested to telephone Applicants' attorney at the Washington DC area office at (703) 312-6600.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR §1.136. Please charge any shortage of fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to the Deposit Account of Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, No. 01-2135 (Application No. 500.38963VX1), and please credit any excess fees to said deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,
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